

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1-6THE WASHINGTON STAR (GREEN LINE)
12 April 1979~~ORIGINAL SALT~~
CIA 3.03 CIA Pub

Soviet Missiles Exceed SALT Limits

By Henry S. Bradsher
Washington Star Staff Writer

A new intelligence study of Soviet strategic forces has found that the Soviet Union probably has about 1,000 more intercontinental weapons than are counted in SALT talks.

The extra weapons are land-based missiles that are not installed in launching silos. They therefore do not count in strategic arms limitations talks, which deal with weapons launchers rather than the weapons themselves.

The SALT II treaty under negotiation — Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin discussed it again last night but reported no agreement on the few remaining issues — is supposed to limit launchers, that is silos, missile submarines and bombers, to 2,400 for each side initially, falling by Dec. 31, 1981, to 2,250.

The Soviet Union is believed to have 2,500 to 2,600 launchers at present. The new intelligence estimate says that the additional missiles raise its total strategic punch to about 3,500 weapons.

Without accepting the intelligence estimate as correct, some administration officials dismiss any extra missiles as being of little military significance. Their reasoning is that the missiles are not quickly usable like those in silos and therefore do not affect the strategic balance.

SINCE BOTH the Soviet Union and the United States have more than enough nuclear firepower to destroy

each other many times over, these officials contend, extra weapons do not erode the deterrence value of U.S. forces.

But other American military planners and civilian officials are more alarmed about the extra missiles.

They fear the missiles might be quickly usable even without silos. Missiles can be fired from "hardpads" covered with collapsible concealment structures, for instance.

The additional missiles increase the Soviet threat to the United States and erode the U.S. deterrent, these skeptics say, because the Kremlin would have that many more weapons left after any initial exchange of missiles. Some planners construct scenarios in which this country would be left vulnerable by an attack on U.S. strategic forces that left overwhelming Soviet firepower still remaining to threaten retaliation for any counterattack.

WHETHER SUCH worries are military paranoia or proper caution depends upon which official is viewing the situation.

The military answer to accusations of worrying too much about theoretical contingencies is that their job has always been to deal with enemy capabilities rather than enemy intentions. The extra missiles are a significant additional strategic capability, but Soviet intentions for the weapons are unknown.

U.S. intelligence always has been weak on Soviet intentions. The United States depends almost entirely on

such technical means as reconnaissance satellites to try to keep track of Soviet strategic forces, not old-fashioned spying.

The technical resources developed so far have had a hard time keeping up with Soviet production of intercontinental missiles in factories shielded against space photography.

THIS LONG has been a worrisome problem within the intelligence community. The 3,500 estimate arose from a new study of the situation that has been circulated to a small number of officials in the Pentagon.

The Soviets are believed to have produced approximately twice as many of each type of missile as was needed to fill silos with attack-ready weapons. The extras included some used up in research and development work and some fired in tests.

The Soviet strategic rocket forces have had a more-active test program than U.S. Air Force missile units. The United States has produced only enough missiles to fill its silos plus small numbers expended in tests.

The difference between calculated Soviet production and known usage leaves large numbers of newly produced missiles unaccounted. And in addition, there is some uncertainty about the disposition of older missiles that have been replaced in silos with newer and better ones. The Soviets are believed never to destroy such old but still workable weapons.

TO GET DOWN from 2,500 or 2,600 strategic weapons that are counted under SALT rules, the Kremlin will have to make cuts when and if SALT II comes into effect. Some bombers might be scrapped. But missiles taken out of silos can be stockpiled and kept lethal.